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Thursday, 29 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/53/298/Add.2)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): This morning I should like first of all to draw the attention of representatives to document A/53/298/Add.2, which contains a letter dated 27 October 1998 addressed to the President of the General Assembly by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences.

As members are aware, the Assembly, in section I, paragraph 7 of its resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly may meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in the letter I have just mentioned, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories to meet in New York from 2 to 5 November 1998, during the main part of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 22

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/306)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.9)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of India to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.9.

Mr. Rao (India): As I am taking the floor for the first time in the General Assembly, may I be permitted to pay my personal tribute to you, Sir, having known you for some time as a colleague of high distinction and great human consideration and with great qualities of leadership and a gift to contribute to the high ideals of the United Nations. It is therefore fitting that you occupy the high office of President of the General Assembly this year. I wish you and your colleagues on the Bureau every success in all your endeavours.

98-86236 (E)

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Turning to the agenda item under consideration, over the last 40 years, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) has acquired a unique stature in promoting legal cooperation among Asian and African States in the important field of international law. With the establishment of a permanent headquarters in New Delhi, the Committee is all set to intensify its work and aim at achieving higher and more broad-based goals in the discharge of its mandate. Its initiatives were well received at the various United Nations conferences, particularly those dealing with the law of treaties and the law of the sea, and have immensely contributed to a world order that is universally respected and treated as fair and equitable for all States.

The annual conferences of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee are major events in international law and the New Delhi session this year in April was well attended. Ministers and senior officers of member States and several observer delegations and representatives of various international organizations participated and contributed to the value of the deliberations. The exchange of views on contemporary issues of international law, including subjects being studied by the International Law Commission and issues arising in connection with the implementation of the world trade regime, proved and will prove highly beneficial to member States and other participants.

These views were duly communicated by the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee to the United Nations, of which it has the distinction of being an observer, and to the International law Commission, whose sessions he regularly attends.

In addition to the annual meetings, discussions are also held in special sessions of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee. Specials sessions held on the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the law concerning reservations to treaties, the treatment of refugees, the exercise of extraterritorial jurisdiction in the international legal order and the proposed meetings on the law of the world trade regime and the review of procedures on the settlement of disputes are some recent examples of its work this year. Reports of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee and other declarations adopted by the Committee as a result of these special sessions have become an important source for the development of international law and are an expression of the views and interests of Asian and African States. It is particularly noteworthy that, through these efforts, the Committee has been dedicating its efforts to identify the common interests of Africa and Asia on a variety of contemporary issues before the United Nations and other world bodies and, in the process, is helping the evolution of a fair, just, equitable and universal legal order.

It is a matter of great pride for all of us that the Committee is one of the few international organizations which function on a very economical budget. Its annual budget is among the lowest for such intergovernmental organizations. From seven States initially, it has now grown to become an organization with 45 member States and has further plans to expand.

We would like to encourage the Committee to expand its activities. The Committee has several forward-looking plans for the benefit of its member States. In this regard, mention could be made of special training programmes for promoting teaching and expertise in legal advising in international law; the establishment of special chairs in international law teaching in various universities of member States; the offer of fellowships to Asian and African students to pursue higher studies in international law; and encouragement of the publication of books and periodicals devoted to the cause of international law and of special interest to Asia and Africa.

It may also be noted that the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee was established to provide expertise in international law to the Asian and African States and specific assistance and advice, upon request, on any topic of international law to those member States. Such advice could be rendered, for example, on developing a suitable legal framework or legislation for the implementation of international treaties; on providing a model agreement to establish joint cooperative arrangements; or on rendering an opinion on a given subject to one or more member States.

It is well understood, however, that some of these activities can be pursued and their aims successfully achieved only with the availability of more funds. The clearance of arrears in contributions and raising funds through voluntary contributions could be of some help.

It is a matter of great pride to note that, in spite of its financial limitations, the work of the Committee is efficiently organized by a small but dedicated band of international law experts working under the guidance of an international diplomatic staff, including its most competent Secretary-General. It has an excellent library. These facilities can and should be further improved. In due course of time, the Committee could operate as an

international law documentation centre for the benefit of the Asian and African States.

We are very optimistic that, in the years to come, the Committee will pay greater attention to many of these aspects and achieve greater glory in clarifying and consolidating the common interests of Asian and African States — and indeed, I might say, the common interests of the international community. It will also surely enhance its activities in training and the dissemination of international law expertise among Asian and African States. Such a step would further strengthen the role of Asian and African States in evolving a just, fair, equitable and universal legal order for all States. We have no doubt that, in this great endeavour, the cooperation between AALCC and the United Nations will continue to grow stronger and stronger. We wish the Committee and its members every success and hope that the United Nations and its membership will continue to provide it with needed strength, support and assistance.

I would ask the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.9, which is now sponsored by a number of delegations: Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kenya, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

Mr. Herndl (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the Union — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country, Cyprus, align themselves with this statement.

Item 22 of the General Assembly's agenda, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee", offers an opportunity, every two years, to appreciate and assess an ongoing process of cooperation which from modest beginnings in 1980 has evolved into a fruitful relationship benefiting both partners. The mutual exchange of ideas and thoughts, of reflections and practical considerations in the field of international law and international legal cooperation is a hallmark of this relationship.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report in document A/53/306, which elucidates the framework of the cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee and the areas in which concrete action has taken place. Two years ago, the European Union had occasion to speak, in the present context, of a veritable *embarras de richesse*. This statement still holds true. The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, whose legal coordination activities span two continents, is participating actively in the programmes of the United Nations Decade of International Law and in programmes on environment and sustainable development. Those areas were explicitly mentioned in General Assembly resolution 51/11, adopted in November 1996. The field of cooperation is, however, still expanding.

The European Union notes with satisfaction the positive relationship which the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee has established with the International Law Commission. In paragraph 22 of its latest annual report, document A/53/10, the Commission refers to a "useful dialogue on subjects of common interest", conducted with the Consultative Committee. As the Secretary-General's report points out, the Consultative Committee has undertaken analytical work on the issue of reservations, currently under study by the International Law Commission. This led the Commission's Special Rapporteur on reservations to state that he was favourably impressed by the interest shown in the relevant work of the Commission, as illustrated by, *inter alia*, the work done on the topic of reservations by the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee.

Since the last discussion of this item by the General Assembly, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, has also held a special meeting on the interrelated aspects of international humanitarian law and the future International Criminal Court, thus offering an additional opportunity for an informal exchange of views on the issues related to the creation of such a court — issues which at that stage were debated within the Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court. The Consultative Committee in fact participated in the famous Rome Conference which resulted in the adoption of the Statute of the Court.

What we are thus witnessing is an ever evolving cooperative relationship between the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee and the United Nations which, if I may say so, has a positive impact on the work of the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. The Consultative Committee is closely following the progressive codification of international law through the International Law Commission. It is also cooperating with United Nations Commission on International Trade

Law (UNCITRAL) in the area of trade law in general and more particularly in the area of insolvency law, with the international bodies set up in the field of the law of the sea, with the World Trade Organization and with humanitarian institutions, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In this respect, it is worth noting that as early as 1966, the Consultative Committee elaborated principles concerning the treatment of refugees — the so-called Bangkok Principles.

In conclusion, the European Union expresses the wish that the fruitful cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, which we are witnessing, will continue in the future to the mutual benefit of both partners.

Mr. Mirzaee Yengejeh (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by expressing the appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General for his report on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, contained in document A/53/306.

Four decades ago we, the Asian and African nations, established the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) in order to play an active role in bringing the rule of law into international relations and to participate actively in the lawmaking process in the international arena. Since its inception, the AALCC has undertaken a number of studies in the field of international legal matters of common concern to the two continents. Moreover, it has functioned as an important forum for exchange of views and information among its member States. It has played a significant role in exploring and harmonizing the needs, views and positions of African and Asian countries concerning various aspects of lawmaking at the international level.

A common objective — striving for the progressive development of international law and its codification — links the AALCC with the United Nations. It was that common aim that led to commencement of cooperation between the two organizations after the foundation of the AALCC in 1956. By the granting of observer status to the AALCC in 1980, this flourishing cooperation was institutionalized and continues to this day. The Consultative Committee continues to accord priority in its programme of work to the topics on the General Assembly's agenda. It has undertaken a systematic and consistent examination of items on the agenda of the Sixth Committee and the International Law Commission from Asian and African perspectives. Moreover, areas of cooperation between the two organizations is not limited to the field of international law but covers economic, environmental and humanitarian areas as well.

In the last two years the Consultative Committee carried out a number of noteworthy activities and constructively participated in the major legal projects of the United Nations. The question of refugees remained one of the priority items on the agenda of the Consultative Committee, and, with the cooperation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), two seminars were held — in Manila and Tehran — in the years under review. With the objective of preparing a piece of model legislation, the question of the legal protection of migrant workers has been placed on the agenda of the Consultative Committee. Another new item, "Extraterritorial application of national legislation: sanctions imposed against third parties", which has relevance to the activities of the United Nations in the areas of free trade and economic development, has been placed on the agenda of the AALCC.

I wish to stress the significant contribution of the AALCC in the exercises that led to the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court on 17 July 1998 in Rome. The Consultative Committee, with the cooperation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), organized a special meeting on the establishment of an international criminal court during its thirty-sixth annual session in Tehran. At that meeting the interrelated aspects of international humanitarian law and the international criminal court were discussed by the participants and experts from the ICRC. Consultations among member States of the AALCC on this topic continued in Rome during the Diplomatic Conference on the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

In conclusion, the report before the General Assembly illustrates in detail the very constructive cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC in the last two years. We feel that prospects for future cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee are quite bright. This is why the Islamic Republic of Iran has co-sponsored the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, contained in document A/53/L.9, and expresses its hope that the draft resolution will receive the unanimous support of the Assembly.

Mr. De Saram (Sri Lanka): The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) is an organization with a large membership, a vast geographical scope and a record of work in several fields of international legal interest. Above all else, it is an organization with an important and broad purpose — that of promoting and developing greater awareness in the international legal communities of Africa and Asia of the many, the ever expanding, the often very complex, contemporary developments in the fields of public and private international law.

It is only natural, therefore, that there should be a cooperative relationship between the AALCC and the United Nations — a relationship whose personifications for those of us who work in the corridors, the lounges and the conference rooms of the United Nations here in New York, are, of course, on the United Nations side of the relationship: the Legal Counsel of the United Nations, Under-Secretary-General Hans Corell, and his colleagues in the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, and, on the side of the AALCC, the ever present and ever informative figure of the Permanent Observer of the AALCC, Ambassador Bhagwat-Singh.

If the development of a network of formal and informal relationships between the AALCC and the United Nations and the dissemination of documentation and information on the numerous legal happenings at the United Nations are essential to a cooperative relationship, it is crucial that we also remind ourselves from time to time that the ultimate objective of the AALCC — its ultimate long-term responsibility in its relationship with the United Nations — is surely that of moving its vast African and Asian membership collectively forward to the stage at which all will be in a position to participate fully and effectively in the many and various multilateral legal forums in which the United Nations system of organizations abounds.

It is a formidable objective that requires a formidable endeavour. Yet it is an endeavour that surely must be made.

The processes of consultation and coordination among representatives having a measure of commonality of interest is necessary in international parliamentary diplomacy. It is fundamental here at the United Nations, in the multilateral international legal context, where, as we all know, legal and other technicalities intertwine with political and other subtleties in time-consuming debate, negotiation and the examination of draft texts that are sometimes far from clear as to their specific purpose.

The practice of consultation and coordination is one that other regional groups having commonalities of interests have already achieved. Some, I feel sure, have, in the practice of consultation and coordination, achieved a high and desirable degree of facility and sophistication.

Those of us from Africa and Asia still have a long way to go. The difficulties are compounded by the practical disadvantages with which we are still encumbered, certainly in the legal field: absence of adequate access, or sometimes no access whatsoever, to documentation and legal periodicals and to centres of legal research and analysis. We are disadvantaged as well, it is clear, when we face the far greater resources with which larger delegations and larger Permanent Missions are clearly blessed.

Thus, it is inevitable that for many of us, as member States of the AALCC, the ultimate goal is an imperative: full and effective consultation and coordination in preparations for legal meetings, which require the identification of issues and the marshalling of necessary information and of precise and comprehensive argumentation.

If there are to be truly meaningful proceedings in the multilateral legal context here at the United Nations, then all States in all legal deliberative bodies must surely stand on the same plateau of awareness and knowledge. It is a difficult and distant goal. Yet it is one that we in the United Nations and, particularly, we in the AALCC, must strive to achieve.

I look forward to working with colleagues in the AALCC, and indeed with colleagues outside of the AALCC, in determining how we in the AALCC might best achieve such coordinative and consultative mechanisms and procedures.

Finally, may I convey my profound respects and very best wishes to the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, Mr. Tang, and to his colleagues. I shall look forward to consulting with them on some of the matters of which I have just spoken.

Mr. Yin Yubiao (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal

Consultative Committee (AALCC). We shall soon be hearing a statement by Mr. Tang Chengyuan, Secretary-General of the AALCC. We are very pleased to note the strengthening of relations and the broadening of the scope of the cooperation between the two organizations.

As an intergovernmental consultative body of Asian and African countries on legal matters, the AALCC has been dedicated since its inception to consultation and coordination among its member States on legal matters; it has followed and studied the latest developments in the field of international law and has conducted in-depth studies of legal matters of common concern to Asian and African countries; it has achieved positive results. Experience shows that the AALCC has not only provided a forum for discussion and cooperation between Asian and African countries on legal questions and other matters of common concern but has also contributed to the progressive development and codification of international law. Through all these endeavours it has established itself as a regional organization with unique influence in the field of law. We are confident that, with the passage of time, this influence will further increase.

Since becoming an observer in the General Assembly, the AALCC has developed closer ties of cooperation with the United Nations. The annual meetings of the AALCC are attended not only by the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations but also by representatives of the International Law Commission (ILC), the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to name only some. Meanwhile, the AALCC sends representatives to various meetings within the United Nations system; they play an active part in deliberations on relevant matters and make a positive contribution. Over the years, the AALCC has always given priority to legal and other matters that are of concern to the United Nations. Its cooperation with the ILC stands out in this regard. The AALCC invites the members of the ILC to its annual meeting to brief it on the work of the Commission, and also includes the report of the ILC on its agenda as a perennial item and puts forward proposals in that regard. On the other hand, the Secretary-General of the AALCC attends the annual meeting of the ILC and briefs its members on the work of the Committee. Cooperation between those two bodies has been fruitful and satisfactory.

Last April, the thirty-seventh annual session of the AALCC was convened at New Delhi; it considered in depth and in detail such important matters as the work of the ILC, the establishment of an International Criminal Court, the United Nations Decade of International Law, the law of the sea, the protection of the environment, treaty reservations, refugees, the extraterritorial applicability of domestic laws, and international waterways. As a result, mutual understanding and cooperation among member States on those matters has been enhanced.

As a member of the United Nations and of the AALCC, China is very pleased with the ever closer and expanding cooperation between the two organizations. We hope that the two organizations will further enhance their cooperation in the field of the progressive development and codification of international law and in other fields of common concern, and that this will serve as a model for the development of close ties and cooperation between international and regional organizations for the achievement of world peace and development.

In the light of what I have said, the Chinese delegation takes great pleasure in having joined other Asian and African countries in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.9, on cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the AALCC. Since becoming a full member of the AALCC in 1983, we have taken an active part in its work and have given it all possible support. We will continue to contribute to the further strengthening of the role and influence of the AALCC and to closer cooperation between the United Nations and the Committee.

Ms. Syahruddin (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/53/306.

It is fitting to recall that more than four decades ago, as an outcome of the Bandung Conference, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) emerged, embracing the two sister continents of Asia and Africa and gradually establishing itself as a major forum for international cooperation. Without a doubt, that historic conference has few parallels, in terms of history, in terms of the vastness of the areas it represented or in terms of the lofty objectives it aimed to achieve. It had a momentous impact on forging an identity between groups of nations with different political, economic and social

structures, and in its dynamism became an independent force in international affairs. In this regard, Indonesia takes great pride in having been one of the seven founding States to have sponsored the AALCC at Bandung in 1955.

In its work, the AALCC has long oriented its activities to complement the work of the United Nations, and has established close relations with the Organization and its various agencies engaged in activities in the field of law and in economic relations. This culminated in the decision of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session to accord permanent observer status to the AALCC, a distinction that it shares with few other international organizations.

Following close consultations between officials of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the AALCC, a programme of cooperation was drawn up and remains a regular feature to this day. In this regard, the AALCC has undertaken important initiatives with a view to strengthening the role of the United Nations. The report of the Secretary-General has focused our attention on such activities. What is noteworthy is that these areas are not confined to the membership of the AALCC, but also involve interested States Members of the United Nations. Furthermore, areas of cooperation have been expanded to cover issues of economic cooperation, the environment and refugees, in addition to work in the field of the progressive codification of international law.

We appreciate the degree and extent of cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC. The AALCC continues to be represented at various meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations, including the sessions of the General Assembly, the United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, and the sessions of the International Law Commission (ILC), the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

When the General Assembly declared the period 1990-1999 as the United Nations Decade of International Law, it was clear from the outset that the AALCC, as a unique regional organization, would play an important role in the attainment and realization of the objectives set out for the Decade. Indonesia, for its part, considers the United Nations Decade of International Law to be of great importance to developing countries in particular, and it earnestly hopes that as we near the end of this period, the participation of the AALCC in activities such as training in international law, the holding of seminars and the intensification of cooperation between United Nations bodies and the AALCC will be further enhanced.

The work of the Sixth Committee is of special interest to the AALCC, and the latter prepares notes and comments on items under consideration in order to assist Member States in their participation. Such assistance contributes to a more fruitful outcome of those deliberations. Of particular relevance is the AALCC's close links with the International Law Commission (ILC) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). With regard to the ILC, it was at the behest of the AALCC that the agenda items entitled "Diplomatic Protection" and the initiation of a feasibility study on the "Law of environment" were thereafter taken into consideration. During the period under review, the cooperation between the AALCC and UNCITRAL continues to be close, as AALCC submitted notes and comments on the items on the agenda of UNCITRAL at its last two sessions.

In this regard, my delegation is confident that such close links will foster trade at the interregional as well as the global levels. The participation of the two bodies has also contributed towards the development and codification of legal norms of international trade law that would reflect the interests of the developing countries.

Indonesia has always attached paramount importance to the subject of the law of the sea. It should be recalled that it was at the request of Indonesia that this item was included in the agenda of the AALCC in 1971. We are therefore most gratified by the endeavours of the AALCC to promote the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Furthermore, the advice of the AALCC to Member States to fully participate in the International Seabed Authority is to be welcomed, as this would ensure that the legitimate interests of the developing nations are safeguarded. Concurrently, it has worked towards strengthening the principle of the common heritage of mankind. The efforts of the AALCC, through its notes and comments on the item "Oceans and law of the sea", offer valuable guidance to Member States in preparing for its discussion in the General Assembly.

Although the role of the AALCC was initially in the field of international law, it has broadened its objectives to provide a forum for international economic cooperation for development. In this regard, the report of the Secretary-General aptly alludes to the activities

undertaken in this field. One of the issues that it has recently addressed concerns the legal issues arising out of the privatization of public sector undertakings and the liberalization of economic activities as a means of increasing economic efficiency. We remain fully confident that the AALCC will continue its endeavours towards promoting economic cooperation within an appropriate framework which could blend economic and legal aspects, in which cooperation as an effective instrument can contribute to lasting growth.

In a global environment where flashpoints of unrest persist throughout the world, the refugee issue remains an outstanding and unresolved problem. In this regard, my delegation is encouraged by the cooperation existing between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the AALCC, and the ongoing efforts in the area of refugee law and refugee problems. With the assistance of the UNHCR, a seminar was held to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the principles adopted at Bangkok by the AALCC concerning the treatment of refugees. We look forward with interest to the consideration of the proposal of the meeting of experts convened in Tehran.

It is important to note the other issues before the AALCC, namely, the environment, migrant workers and the item entitled "Extraterritorial application of national legislation: sanctions imposed against third parties". Indonesia, for its part, is pleased to support the activities of the AALCC and remains confident that such worthy efforts will continue to strengthen the AALCC's contributions to the Organization and to the international community.

In conclusion, Indonesia, as a founding member of the AALCC, is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution before us entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee", as contained in document A/53/L.9.

Mr. Gaa (Philippines): I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the agenda item before us. The report is a very useful gauge not only of the cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, but also of the achievements of the Committee.

When the Committee was formed over four decades ago, the major challenge that faced it was how to play a major role in one of the most fundamental global transformations in history — a transformation that changed the complexion of the international community. During the time when the newly independent States of Asia and Africa began emerging from colonial rule, the Committee proved to be a critical and invaluable player in creating a wider appreciation of international legal issues among its members by serving as a forum for consultation and cooperation on legal issues between Asian and African States. During that critical time and even after, the Committee contributed to the formulation and progressive development of international law by taking into account the political and economic needs of those developing countries.

I join other speakers in noting the many specific instances in which the Committee contributed to the formation and progressive development of international law.

Today, as we stand on the doorstep of a new millennium, another fundamental global transformation is facing the Committee: the challenge of globalization. It is a challenge that the Committee, with its decades of experience and with an understanding of the needs of its members, is all too ready to face. As the Committee has already shown success in formulating common approaches to complex international legal issues, the Philippines is confident that it will be able to face this new challenge.

The Committee will be conducting its work against a backdrop of complex and profound international events and transformations. Those events have brought welcome changes, but these have been eclipsed by the problems and difficulties that have forced all of us to call into question some of the traditional and familiar ways in which we have been addressing the challenges facing us.

Whereas once we dwelled in a bipolar and deeply divided world, today we find ours a seamless globalized world. It is a world where the interaction among States has intensified, and this interaction has come in many forms. While the globalized world has meant progress for many, this increased interaction can also mean a possible increase in the potential for misunderstanding. Here the Committee has already proved its worth. Much of its work in the progressive development of international law has been in the area of the formulation of norms, particularly in the areas of economic cooperation, the environment and global resources, that will help States interact with each other in a dynamic but orderly manner. In addition, the Committee has achieved much in the area of dispute resolution, particularly focusing on the

increasing role of the International Court of Justice, as well as on other dispute-settlement mechanisms, such as arbitration.

The United Nations has itself sought to adjust to face challenges of today's globalized world. The Committee can ensure its active participation in dealing with these challenges by continuing to orient its activities to complement the work of the United Nations and by strengthening its close relations with the United Nations and its various agencies engaged in law and economic matters.

Realizing early on that the phenomenon of globalization should be addressed multilaterally, the United Nations has sought the cooperation of other multilateral organizations to strengthen normative, legal and institutional frameworks in the hope that the global economy can be managed more effectively and, perhaps more importantly, more equitably. In this regard, the Committee, with its vast experience of successfully challenging and changing the post-colonial landscape, should prove invaluable.

As a member of the Committee and of this Organization, the Philippines renews its pledge to work towards establishing a global order in which peace prevails and nations live in harmony and security and with their sovereignty respected; an order in which growth and development are rights and not privileges; a world of justice and equality where the individual and his or her rights are respected; a world that protects the earth and that grows and develops only in a manner that will sustain the natural environment.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): My delegation is happy to observe that since the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/2 of October 1980, invited the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) to participate in its sessions in the capacity of observer, since the subsequent establishment of the AALCC permanent observer missions to the United Nations in New York and Vienna, and particularly following General Assembly resolution 51/11 of 4 November 1996, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee", there has been a significant widening of the scope of cooperation between the two bodies.

The report of the Secretary-General in document A/53/306 on the item before us gives a succinct account of the various activities undertaken by the AALCC within the cooperation framework. It is clear from this account that the work programme of the Consultative Committee is very supportive of the agenda of the United Nations and focuses substantially on matters of current interest to the Organization. Thus, the AALCC no longer confines itself to the field of international law but now covers as well matters in the economic, environmental and humanitarian fields.

In the economic field, for example, we note with appreciation the AALCC's work programme on international economic cooperation for development, particularly as it relates to the development of international trade law, the dispute mechanism of the World Trade Organization and the regulatory framework for the privatization of public sector undertakings and other liberalization measures within the context of economic reforms.

Equally worthy of note is the Consultative Committee's work in the humanitarian field, particularly its close involvement in the study of refugee law and refugee problems in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

As regards the environment, the AALCC has taken initiatives in prodding the International Law Commission to undertake a feasibility study on "Law of Environment".

Developing countries owe the AALCC a debt of gratitude for the various measures it has taken for the promotion of the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Committee has consistently urged the full and effective participation of its member States in the International Seabed Authority so as to ensure and safeguard the legitimate interests of developing countries and to strengthen the principle of the common heritage of mankind. We join the Consultative Committee in calling upon developing countries to give timely consideration to the need to adopt a common policy and strategy for the interim period before the commercial exploitation of deep seabed minerals becomes feasible.

We are also grateful to the AALCC secretariat for facilitating the General Assembly's discussion on the agenda item "Oceans and the law of the sea" by preparing notes and comments for use by representatives of its member States. In this connection, we commend the Committee for its invaluable assistance designed to further the work of the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly.

The AALCC, in pursuance of the cooperation programme, participates in many meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations. In this regard, my delegation is particularly pleased about the Consultative Committee's participation in the United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rome in June and July 1998, which culminated in the adoption of the Statute for the establishment of an International Criminal Court. We welcome this development in our collective endeavour to provide a legal and constitutional framework to hold perpetrators accountable for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and serious violations of international humanitarian law. It is pertinent to recall in this regard that the AALCC's initiatives on the interrelated aspects of international humanitarian law and the International Criminal Court contributed significantly to the legal regime of the Court.

We also note with appreciation the Consultative Committee's invaluable contribution to the implementation of the programme of the United Nations Decade of International Law and to the work of the International Law Commission. Equally worthy of note is the Committee's promotion of the wider use of the International Court of Justice, particularly in matters relating to the protection and preservation of the environment.

Lastly, we commend the AALCC for its active participation in the current reform process geared to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations, including improvements in the functioning of the General Assembly. We encourage the Committee to continue with its work in this regard.

Concerning other issues before the Consultative Committee, we note with interest its ongoing work on international instruments adopted by some of the recent United Nations international conferences and its study of the topical issue of national legislation with extraterritorial application. We look forward with great interest to the final conclusions of this study in view of the strong passions the subject has evoked in the United Nations.

It is clear from the report of the Secretary-General that the cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee has proved very beneficial to the two organizations and therefore should be given every encouragement and support so as to strengthen it further. It is our hope that the debate on this item will terminate in a renewed resolve of all Member States of this Organization to extend such encouragement and support.

My delegation is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/53/L.9, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee".

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/2 of 13 October 1980, I now call on the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, Mr. Tang Chengyuan.

Mr. Tang (Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee): Allow me, on behalf of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) to extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We would also like to congratulate the members of your Bureau. We are confident that under your able and adroit stewardship the Assembly will give due consideration to the many items on its agenda and make this session a momentous success.

It is with gratitude that I report to the Assembly on the state of the close cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC. May I recall that a similar honour and privilege was afforded at the fifty-first session, and that the General Assembly on that occasion requested the United Nations Secretary-General to submit, at its fifty-third session, a report on the cooperation between the two organizations. That report is now before the General Assembly in document A/53/306. I would like to congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan for this comprehensive report and to commend it to the General Assembly.

The AALCC, which began with a modest membership of seven States when it was constituted in November 1956, today has 44 members embracing the African and Asian region. It has established itself as a major forum for international cooperation, and its work programme has accordingly been suitably oriented to meet challenges posed by contemporary international society in general and the needs of an expanding membership embracing the two continents of Asia and Africa in particular.

Last year witnessed the opening of a new chapter in the history of the Committee, when a special session of the Committee decided that its permanent headquarters

would be in New Delhi. That momentous decision was made feasible by the generous offer of the Government of India and by the generous gesture of the Government of Qatar.

In the years since the Committee was constituted, and in particular since it was accorded permanent observer status in 1980, its work in support of the United Nations has been predominantly aimed at rendering assistance to the AALCC member Governments in their consideration of the agenda items before the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. The secretariat has also endeavoured to furnish assistance in the economic and humanitarian fields through the preparation of briefs and studies. This reflects the inclusion of certain items and topics under consideration by the United Nations in the work programme of the AALCC.

Yet another significant aspect of the AALCC's work in support of the United Nations consists of the efforts made to strengthen the United Nations by promoting the ratification and implementation of major international instruments and through such initiatives as the wider use of the International Court of Justice for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Following the conclusion of a formal cooperation agreement with the United Nations in May 1987, periodic consultations have taken place on matters of common concern between successive Secretaries-General and other relevant senior officers of the two organizations. The AALCC has also concluded formal cooperation agreements with a number of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Maritime Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. The AALCC also maintains close links with other bodies and agencies, such as the International Court of Justice, the International Law Commission (ILC), the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The secretariat is negotiating a cooperation agreement with the World Intellectual Property Organization.

May I recall in this regard that during the 1960s the AALCC was among the first regional organizations to study the matter of the legality of nuclear weapons. During the 1970s, when the law of the sea and the question of a new international economic order were in the forefront, the AALCC made its contribution by being instrumental in evolving the concept of archipelagic States and exclusive economic zones.

Earlier in this decade, when the General Assembly decided to convene a conference on environment and development, the AALCC secretariat involved itself as extensively as its resources permitted, with the preparatory phase of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The involvement of the AALCC with the United Nations Decade of International Law is too well known to need recounting before this Assembly.

More recently, following the adoption by the ILC of a draft statute for an international criminal court, in the General Assembly the AALCC was actively involved in the process culminating in the convening of a United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court. The secretariat prepared an overview of the draft Statute of the International Criminal Court, prepared by the Preparatory Committee, and was represented at the Conference in Rome.

The AALCC has often been among the first regional bodies to study current legal developments of concern to the developing countries. Last year, the AALCC was among the first to consider the item entitled "Extraterritorial application of national legislation: sanctions against third parties". The item was considered at the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh sessions of the AALCC, held in Tehran in May 1997 and New Delhi in April 1998, respectively. The matter was also discussed by a group of experts, which met in January 1998, and I report with a degree of satisfaction that the secretariat of the Committee has published the proceedings of that meeting, together with the papers presented there.

The AALCC, in response to the call of the General Assembly, organized a special meeting on reservations to treaties to consider the preliminary conclusions on the reservations to normative multilateral treaties, including human rights treaties. A report of that special meeting was thereafter submitted to the Chairman of the International Law Commission during the course of its recently concluded fiftieth session. Allow me to state in this regard that we deeply cherish our ties of cooperation, both with this body as well as with the International Law Commission.

During the years since its establishment, the AALCC has endeavoured to make its modest contribution

to the attainment of the objectives and goals relevant to its sphere of competence. In the process, it has established a symbiotic relationship with a number of organs and agencies of the United Nations. I should like, on behalf of the AALCC, to extend our assurances that the Committee will continue to support the work and activities of the United Nations bodies and to lend its cooperation towards the prevalence of the rule of law in international relations.

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee is proud of its record of cooperative arrangements with the United Nations in our common endeavours. We shall continue to strive to fortify this cooperation and to strengthen the international legal order. We firmly believe that the international legal order must affirm such principles and norms of inter-State relations as the sovereign equality of States; non-interference in the internal affairs of other States; the non-use of force; the peaceful settlement of disputes; pacta sunt servanda; respect for human rights; the right to development; the protection and preservation of the environment of the global commons; and the principle of the common heritage of mankind.

Finally, permit me to state that a report on cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC, the resolution of this body on the subject and my statement before this body will be placed before the AALCC at its thirty-eighth session, scheduled to be held in Accra, Ghana, from 29 March to 2 April 1999. Permit me to take this opportunity to extend to all a cordial invitation to participate in that session of the AALCC.

I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor and I also thank representatives here for the patient hearing that they have given me.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I am pleased to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/53/L.9, the following countries have become cosponsors: Australia, Cyprus, Malaysia and New Zealand.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.9.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.9 was adopted (resolution 53/14).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 22?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 34

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/435)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.14)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Kazakhstan to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.14.

Mrs. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan): As a representative of the State which has held the chairmanship of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) since May this year, I consider it a great honour to be addressing the General Assembly on the agenda item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization" on behalf of the 10 States members of ECO. I should also like, on their behalf, to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the detailed report, contained in document A/53/435, prepared on the subject under discussion. In our view, this document demonstrates clearly and sufficiently fully the increased volume and main areas of cooperation between the two organizations and defines the prospects for its expansion and intensification.

The ECO member countries attach great importance to the development of regional cooperation. In our view, the trend currently under way in the world to strengthen and expand regional cooperation is an integral part of the overall process of globalization and creates both the necessary conditions for the increased well-being of the populations of the countries of the region and the prerequisites for the progressive development of the world economy as a whole.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies, programmes and funds can play and are playing an important and often universal role in promoting the development of regional and interregional cooperation. The United Nations makes a major contribution to defining promising spheres and potentials for the

development of regional and interregional cooperation, and also in creating the necessary conditions for making it more active. In this respect, the work of the regional commissions of the United Nations, including the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), which are actively promoting cooperation between the main subregional organizations in the Asia and Pacific and European regions, deserves to be particularly singled out.

As is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, active cooperation between ECO and ESCAP started in 1993 with the signature of a memorandum of understanding based on the Treaty of Izmir and the terms of reference of ESCAP. Currently, a project is being implemented in ESCAP to strengthen subregional economic cooperation in trade and investment among the south-western States members of the Commission, aimed at assisting ECO countries in exploiting new trade and investment opportunities provided by the progressive development of infrastructure in the ECO region. The prospects for intensifying technical cooperation between ECO and ESCAP are also being studied in relation to the development of a subregional database on trade and investment, strengthening of inter-subregional financial linkages, institution- and capacity-building and strengthening the potential of the organization, and also in relation to trade policy.

We greatly appreciate the work of ESCAP and the ECE on the development of the United Nations special programme for the four Central Asian countries that are members of ECO, the aim of which is to assist the States of the region in developing and intensifying their mutual cooperation, promoting economic growth and achieving effective integration into the world economy. The Declaration on the special programme for the economies of Central Asia, signed in March this year, also defines spheres of cooperation that are vitally important for the countries of the region, such as the development of transport infrastructure, rational and effective use of Central Asia's energy and water resources and cooperation in relation to the development of ways of delivering hydrocarbons to world markets.

In view of the priority significance of reliable and effective functioning of ground transport and the establishment of an appropriate transport infrastructure for the economic integration of the ECO countries, seven of which are landlocked, one of the priorities for our region remains cooperation between ECO, ESCAP and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in the development of the transport sector. An important and constructive role in providing assistance in solving this problem, as well as in other spheres, including increasing trade efficiency, the development of data processing and strengthening of the potential of the ECO secretariat, is played by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Since 1997 UNDP has been providing financial support for a joint ECO/UNDP project to grant assistance to the ECO member countries in increasing trade efficiency and developing economic cooperation.

Convincing evidence of the progressive movement towards expansion and intensification of cooperation between ECO and UNDP was the signing in New York at the beginning of this month of a project on technical and financial assistance from UNDP to increase the effectiveness of the work of the ECO secretariat. This project provides for comprehensive assistance by UNDP to the process of training and advanced training of the staff of the ECO secretariat, and also for assistance in providing it with technical equipment.

We express our satisfaction at the progressive development of cooperation between the United Nations system and ECO, and we call on the relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations to further expand and intensify their cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization in various areas of development.

The Economic Cooperation Organization, which brings together 10 States with a total population of more than 300 million people, is a promising and dynamically developing organization. It possesses considerable potential both for the expansion of trade and economic, humanitarian and cultural links in our region and for the development of interregional communication. The Declaration and other documents adopted at the most recent ECO summit — the fifth summit — in Almaty in May this year create good conditions for the further intensification of cooperation and the establishment of a favourable trade and investment climate in our region, in which both the member countries of the organization and many States of Europe and Asia are equally interested. We wish to note with satisfaction that over the period that has elapsed since the establishment of ECO, the States members of the organization have achieved significant progress in such important spheres of activity as trade, the development of communications, of ground, sea and air transport systems and of a network of oil and gas pipelines and also in the spheres of energy supply and

information exchange. Fuller and more effective utilization of the existing potential of ECO will certainly be beneficial both to the countries located in our region and to the States located outside it.

On behalf of the States members of ECO, I submit for consideration by the General Assembly draft resolution A/53/L.14, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization. The draft notes the level of cooperation achieved between the two Organizations and contains provisions aimed at further developing and intensifying the cooperation between the United Nations and ECO. In the course of consultations on the draft resolution we sought to take into account all the comments and proposals received from the delegations of interested countries.

The sponsors of the draft resolution call on the delegations of States Members of the United Nations to adopt by consensus draft resolution A/53/L.14, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization, submitted under agenda item 34.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, let me thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his report on the issue of cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and also extend my sincere appreciation to Mr. Onder Ozar, Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, and his colleagues for their endeavours to strengthen the secretariat of ECO and to expand cooperation with regional, multilateral and international bodies and organizations, in particular the United Nations system.

The process of globalization seems to be an undeniable fact of our collective life today, and for the past decade or so it has made itself felt to different degrees, in different forms and in different arenas of the national life of societies. We are all cognizant of the fact that powerful transnational forces are at work reshaping the key features of world markets in capital, goods, services, labour and technology. Likewise, we are aware that the twin process of globalization and liberalization have expanded and deepened the mutual interdependence of societies, which have, in turn, increased the potential for international interaction and cooperation.

In such a global environment, the real world is perceived as increasingly borderless, and the creation of regional economic groupings is a real approach by developing countries to integrate themselves smoothly into the world economy. In fact, by lowering tariff and other trade barriers and by eliminating impediments to capital flows in the regional grouping arrangements, developing countries prepare themselves and establish necessary capacities for integration into the world economy and for addressing existing and future global challenges.

The main objectives of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which was established in 1985 and whose current membership numbers 10 countries, are removal of trade barriers within the ECO region, expansion of intraregional and interregional trade and ensuring the gradual and smooth integration of the economies of ECO member States into the world economy and their participation in the globalization process. The situation of ECO member States and their existing domestic socio-economic conditions necessitate the extension of cooperation for utilizing their potential and for realizing opportunities with all international and multilateral bodies, in particular the United Nations system. At the very centre of the region's potential are its oil and gas reserves and rich mineral resources, which provide all the ingredients for a sound industrial base. The region also has considerable agricultural potential, with its vast lands accommodating both livestock and grain production. Economic, social and environmental challenges in the region are also enormous. All new members of ECO are at the stage of transition from central planning to market-oriented economies. Since these States are also landlocked countries, strengthening the transit infrastructure at the regional level is an urgent need for the expansion of trade, increasing investment opportunities and their integration into the world economy. Protection of the environment, in particular in the Caspian Sea, Aral Sea and some other regions in Central Asia, is among the major challenges before littoral States and concerned countries in the Organization. The region also continues to be one of the regions most vulnerable to the illicit cultivation and production, trafficking and consumption of narcotic drugs.

We firmly believe that the United Nations system, as a multidimensional mechanism, should play an effective role in the process of strengthening ECO so that it can be a more prosperous and functional regional organization. The United Nations funds and programmes and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific have increased their consultations and cooperation with ECO and its associated bodies to assist its member States in capacity-building to enable them to address these challenges. The United Nations

Development Programme has also contributed to the capacity-building of the ECO secretariat, as well as to trade efficiency, economic cooperation and resource complementarities among ECO member States through bilateral and trilateral cooperation mechanisms. The cooperation between the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and ECO is quite extensive, particularly in sharing analytical and technical information and ideas, expanding relations among their subsidiary bodies in various fields and collaboration on the issues of transit and transportation and other related matters. Other United Nations funds and programmes have also been engaged in cooperation and consultation in areas such as population, food security, agricultural and industrial development and controlling narcotic drugs.

Despite these admirable endeavours, the demands for promoting such cooperation at the regional level are high. The restructuring of the Economic Cooperation Organization requires the assistance of the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and of the relevant international financial institutions. These contributions should be geared towards promoting the socio-economic infrastructure of the member States of ECO. The opportunities for cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, energy, environment, industry and agriculture are undeniably vast and need no further elaboration.

The major challenge for economic prosperity and sustainable development in the region is outside pressure for reshaping the rational economic relations among regional countries and their commercial relations with the rest of the world. Viable and feasible routes for export of oil and raw materials have been halted by outside pressure. An inevitable result of this would be expensive substitute routes with adverse environmental effects. These policies adversely affect regional cooperation and will hinder the efforts of countries of the region for expeditious integration into the world economy.

I cannot conclude without referring to the menace of illicit cultivation and trafficking of narcotic drugs in the region. We are of the view that intensive regional cooperation to combat this hazardous problem is vital for socio-economic advancement and human development in the region. The establishment of a Drug Control Unit in the ECO is a positive step towards the realization of this objective. In this context, cooperation between ECO, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and other intergovernmental and international organizations, especially in supporting transit States in their efforts to halt the inflow and trafficking of illicit drugs to consuming countries, is imperative. Moreover, the role of the respective bodies of the United Nations in helping States address socio-economic and human development challenges resulting from the drug menace in the region should be strengthened.

Allow me to close by expressing our wish for the adoption of the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization" by a unanimous decision of the Assembly.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker on the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.14.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.14 was adopted (resolution 53/15).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 34?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 26

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/430)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.13)

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* I call on the representative of Qatar to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.13.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The State of Qatar, as current Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), has the honour and privilege of introducing the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference", contained in document A/53/L.13 of 27 October 1998, on behalf of

the 56 States members and six observers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

At the very outset, we would like to convey our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, contained in document A/53/430, submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 52/4 of 22 October 1997.

On 1 October 1998, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, addressed the annual coordination meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the OIC, held at United Nations Headquarters. At the coordination meeting, it was unanimously agreed to admit Guyana as the fifty-sixth State member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and to permit Thailand to participate as an observer. The ministers also reviewed the international situation, with particular attention to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Jammu and Kashmir; Afghanistan; Somalia; the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan; the consequences of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait; and the situation pertaining to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Security Council resolutions 731 (1992) and 883 (1993). In addition, the ministers discussed the question of United Nations reform.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General of the United Nations attended the Eighth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which was held at Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, from 9 to 11 December 1997. During the Summit, the Secretary-General conferred with a number of heads of delegation and other senior participants in the Summit, including the OIC Secretary-General, Mr. Azeddine Laraki, as well as the new Chairman of the OIC, President Seyed Mohammad Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

At the twenty-fifth meeting of Foreign Ministers of the OIC, which was convened at Doha in the State of Qatar from 15 to 19 March 1998, the Secretary-General of the United Nations was represented by his Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference is satisfied at its active participation in the work of the United Nations with the aim of implementing the purposes and principles of the Charter. It is gratified by the close cooperation between the two organizations during the period since the adoption of resolution 52/4 of 22 October 1997. Over the past year there have been many cases of the two organizations undertaking joint, mutually reinforcing efforts. A new political dimension has been added to the consultations on political issues of interest to both organizations, including cooperation with a view to settling the dispute in Afghanistan. This demonstrates the great potential of concrete joint cooperation between the two organizations in the field of peacemaking.

In fact, since its establishment, the Organization of the Islamic Conference has been firmly committed to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

There has been a great expansion in the scope of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, especially in the political, social and economic, humanitarian, cultural and technical fields. The two organizations are jointly seeking solutions to global problems relating to international peace and security, disarmament, decolonization, the right of self-determination, human rights and economic development.

The Islamic group hopes that the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations will be granted diplomatic status by the host country, in accordance with Article 105 of the Charter and with the Headquarters Agreement concluded with the host country, because the Mission represents an international organization that the General Assembly has invited to participate in its sessions with observer status. This would facilitate its work in a manner similar to that which obtains in Geneva. This status would undoubtedly contribute to furthering the work of the Mission, and would enable it to achieve what is expected of it in the service of the joint endeavours of the two organizations and their subsidiary bodies.

I turn now to draft resolution A/53/L.13 which I have the honour to introduce. It describes not only the multifaceted, concrete cooperation between the two organizations. It also calls for continued close cooperation. The substance of the draft resolution is identical to that of texts adopted on this agenda item at previous sessions.

The preambular part of the draft resolution takes into account the desire of both organizations to continue their common search for solutions to global problems. It also recalls Articles of the Charter of the United Nations that encourage the activities through regional cooperation for the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The preamble also notes the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations,

its funds and programmes and specialized agencies and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its specialized and affiliated institutions. It further notes the encouraging progress made in the 10 priority areas of cooperation, as well as in the identification of other areas of cooperation. It also expresses the conviction that the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its organs and institutions contributes to the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Moreover, it notes with appreciation the determination of both organizations to strengthen further the existing cooperation by developing specific proposals in the designated priority areas of cooperation, as well as in the political field. The OIC welcomes the results of the general meeting of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions, held at Geneva from 13 to 15 July 1998.

The OIC also welcomes the high-level meeting, convened by the Secretary-General on 28 and 29 July 1998, of regional organizations, including the OIC, with which the United Nations has cooperated in preventive diplomacy and the establishment and maintenance of international peace.

In the operative paragraphs, the Organization of the Islamic Conference takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/430) of 24 September 1998, and takes note also of the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the general meeting of the secretariats and representatives of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its specialized and affiliated institutions. It notes with satisfaction the active participation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in the work of the United Nations towards the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In addition, it calls on the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to continue to cooperate in their common search for solutions to global problems, such as questions relating to international peace and security, disarmament, self-determination, decolonization, fundamental human rights, social and economic development, and technical cooperation.

Moreover, the General Assembly welcomes the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations in areas of common concern and to review the ways and means for enhancing the mechanisms of such cooperation.

The General Assembly welcomes with appreciation the increased cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in the field of peacemaking and preventive diplomacy and takes note of the effective cooperation between the two organizations in the search for a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. It welcomes the efforts of the two organizations to strengthen information exchange, coordination and cooperation between them in areas of mutual interest in the political field and their ongoing consultations with a view to further developing the mechanisms of such cooperation.

The General Assembly also welcomes the periodic high-level meetings between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as well as between senior secretariat officials of the two organizations, and encourages their participation in important meetings of the two organizations. The General Assembly encourages the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue to expand their cooperation with the subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, particularly by negotiating cooperation agreements, and invites them to multiply the contacts and meetings of the focal points for cooperation in priority areas of interest to the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The General Assembly urges the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system, especially the lead agencies, to provide increased technical and other forms of assistance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions in order to enhance cooperation. It expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his continued efforts to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions to serve the mutual interests of the two organizations in the political, economic, social, cultural and humanitarian fields.

The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the state of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and it notes that the General Assembly would include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference".

On behalf of the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the observers, I wish to ask the members of the General Assembly to support the draft resolution and to facilitate its adoption by consensus, as has been the case in past years.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me first express my delegation's appreciation and gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his report on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference". The report reflects the areas and issues of interest to both Organizations in the political, economic and cultural fields. A great deal has been achieved, but much remains to be done. The Secretary-General has touched upon a number of areas on which solid ground for cooperation has already been established.

The participation of the Secretary-General in the Eighth Islamic Summit, held in Tehran in December 1997, was regarded as a manifestation of the excellent relationship and useful cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In his address to the Islamic Summit, the Secretary-General duly referred to this cooperation and eloquently emphasized that through the OIC,

> "the world understands the desires and demands of over one fifth of the world's population, from all continents. That is why the partnership between the OIC and the United Nations is so important. That is why it holds such promise for all the peoples of the United Nations." (*SG/SM/6418, p. 2*)

We are indeed pleased to note the remark of the Secretary-General in his report that

> "During the period under review, cooperation on political matters intensified between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in particular with regard to ongoing peacemaking efforts." (*A/53/430, para. 7*)

The close cooperation between the two organizations includes cooperation on the peace process in Tajikistan, on various stages of the crisis in Afghanistan and on a number of other issues around the world.

The members of the OIC are firmly of the view that effective, constructive and meaningful participation of Islamic countries in the management of international affairs is essential for maintaining peace and security in the world. Thus, they are determined to make positive contributions to international peace and security and to sustainable growth and development. To this end, they have, at various gatherings of the OIC, considered areas of interest and importance that require collective efforts. Decisions and resolutions were adopted at the Tehran Summit and at the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting in Doha, Qatar, last March on numerous issues, most of which appear also on the agenda of the United Nations.

Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Furthermore, the Islamic countries have declared their strict adherence to cooperation for the protection and preservation of the environment, combating terrorism and illicit trafficking in drugs, as well as respect for international law in general and the United Nations Charter in particular. They have also expressed their desire to cooperate with the United Nations on issues of significance, such as human rights and disarmament. The proposed meeting between the OIC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would further forge a spirit of cooperation and understanding on the important issue of human rights.

Children's issues, as the Secretary-General says in his report,

> "continue to retain high visibility on the political agenda in the Islamic world. This manifested itself amply during the eighth OIC Summit at Tehran". (*A/53/430, para. 22*)

The same Summit decided, among other things, to establish an ad hoc committee to develop guidelines to promote dialogue, cooperation and confidence among its member States. The first meeting of the committee, which was held in Tehran last May, managed to produce a comprehensive document which indeed is reflective of different ways and means of promoting the dialogue, cooperation and confidence also cherished by the United Nations Charter.

The issues of common interest to the two organizations are by no means confined to what I have attempted to elaborate on here. There exist common desires and aims in areas which need to be further developed, and to this end new avenues for better understanding and strengthened cooperation in various fields should be explored. We are pleased to note that the report of the Secretary-General is promising in its recognition that there has been broad agreement on the value of regular political consultations between the two organizations.

I wish to close by reaffirming the pledge of my Government, as current Chairman of the OIC, to gear our efforts towards the promotion and strengthening of the cooperation between the two organizations.

Mr. Vural (Turkey): Today is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Republic, and as I will be the host of the reception to which we will welcome representatives in a few minutes, I would like to thank the representative of Pakistan for offering me his place on the list of speakers.

I will be very brief. I would like to welcome the report presented by the Secretary-General to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It gives evidence of a most welcome deepening of relations between the two organizations through high-level contacts, regular consultations and technical meetings. My delegation supports this process and calls for its continuation.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) covers a vast geographical area and an extensive population dispersed over four continents. It represents a rich diversity of cultures and political systems, taking as a common denominator the heritage of Islam, which literally derives from the word "peace". Through its members, the OIC has a heritage of profound historical and political experience, which enables it to be an important instrument of peace and stability in the world.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations has proved to be an indispensable dimension of the international system. The Organization of the Islamic Conference is one of these major regional organizations that can contribute to and benefit from the work of the United Nations.

In view of all this, my delegation supports the draft resolution presented by the State of Qatar, which calls for the enhancement of cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC. We hope that such cooperation will further contribute to the global efforts for peace and international solidarity.

Ms. Syahrudin (Indonesia): I should like to begin by expressing my delegation's deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for the lucid and comprehensive report he has presented on the state of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), contained in document A/53/430. My delegation would also like to acknowledge the important contributions to the report made by the various entities of the United Nations system.

It is indeed a source of particular satisfaction to my delegation to note the many important cooperative activities that have taken place between the two organizations over the past year in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/4 of 22 October 1997, which Indonesia had the honour to introduce last year in its capacity as Chairman of the twenty-fourth meeting of Foreign Ministers of the OIC.

The delegation of Indonesia welcomes the intensification of cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC in the political field and has noted the broad agreement that exists on the value of regular consultations between these two organizations. We are mindful of the important process of regular consultations between the secretariats of the two organizations regarding the situations in Somalia and Tajikistan. With regard to the conflict in Afghanistan, we have noted the significance of the joint United Nations/OIC peacemaking mission to that country and the neighbouring countries earlier this year, as well as the subsequent series of meetings of the Afghan parties held under joint United Nations and OIC auspices. Indeed, we see merit in the observation by the co-chairmanship by the two organizations on the valuable potential of concrete joint cooperation in the field of peacemaking beyond the conflict in Afghanistan.

In the economic sphere, the imbalances and inequities of international economic relations continue to bear heavily on the OIC member countries, thereby underlining the importance of an effective and efficient functioning of the broad range of institutional and operational instruments which exist within the OIC for the conduct of economic cooperation. Above all, however, they underscore the imperative need for closer cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC in

the economic and social fields, including between the two organizations' specialized agencies and institutions.

In this regard, my delegation is heartened by the encouraging progress in the 10 priority areas of cooperation discussed in the general meeting between the representatives of the secretariats of the two organizations earlier this year. We look forward to the development of specific proposals in areas such as science and technology, trade and development, technical cooperation among Islamic countries, assistance to refugees, food security and agriculture, education and eradication of illiteracy, human resources development and the environment.

Finally, Indonesia would like to join Qatar, Chairman of the twenty-fifth meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in recommending the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution before the Assembly. For, indeed, its objective of strengthening the bonds between the two organizations — their shared commitment to peace and security and social and economic development — is one which deserves the continued support of Member States.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) brings together more than 50 member States representing one fifth of the world's population, spread over nearly all the continents. This nearly universal representativity confers on the OIC duties and obligations on a global scale, and it is therefore quite natural that it shares the purposes and principles of the United Nations as well as the same concerns. This explains the great importance that OIC member States attach to cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations within the framework of a mutually beneficial partnership.

This political will to consolidate, reinforce and expand cooperation has enabled the two organizations to establish appropriate machinery for consultations and to pool their efforts in the search for solutions to the crises which the Islamic Ummah is now experiencing.

Among such crises is the question of Palestine, which, having been at the origin of the founding of the OIC, is at the forefront. My country, which is chairing the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, can attest to the vitality of the relationship between the two organizations on this issue.

Elsewhere, the conflicts now raging in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and, very recently, in Kosovo, which could constitute serious threats to the peace and security of the regions involved, have provided the two organizations an opportunity for working together in close cooperation to strengthen the impact of their joint efforts to search for and implement means of lessening tensions in those parts of the world.

The maintenance of peace, conflict management and the search for political solutions to conflicts are not the sole framework for cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations. Increasingly, the two organizations have been building and strengthening cooperation all over, covering the enormous and significant areas of economic and social development, the environment and refugees, to name only a few.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In this context, the general meeting of representatives of the secretariats of United Nations bodies and the OIC, held in Geneva on 13 and 15 July 1998, is of particular importance.

It is also in this context that we welcome the fact that, the United Nations Secretary-General attended the eighth OIC Summit in Tehran in December 1997. That was the first time a United Nations Secretary-General had attended an OIC Summit, and his presence will have the effect of opening up new prospects for consolidating and expanding bonds of cooperation between the United Nations and the Islamic Conference.

Our world today is going through an era of numerous serious challenges that require determination and a shared will on the part of the entire international community. Here, cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference is an appropriate response. Such cooperation must be sustained and encouraged, and the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution before us, as contained in document A/53/L.13, would be a great contribution to that end.

Mr. Shahid (Bangladesh): The Bangladesh delegation finds the report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), as contained in document A/53/430, useful in terms of understanding the level and depth of the relationship between these two important organizations.

We are indeed encouraged by the growing relationship between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference during the last few years, particularly during the past year, in a number of areas. We note with particular interest the cooperation between these two organizations in the fields of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and conflict resolution. In this connection, my delegation commends the joint initiatives of the United Nations and the OIC with regard to Afghanistan and Tajikistan and the exchange of views on other areas with potential for conflict.

We would, however, like to point out that, while we welcome initiative from the OIC in the peace and security area, we firmly believe that the United Nations must share the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The efforts of such organizations as the OIC should be complementary to United Nations efforts, not a substitute.

The root of conflict lies in poverty, deprivation and discrimination. It is unfortunate that, although much desired, not enough attention has been devoted to addressing the challenges of poverty. We believe that a major focus of cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC should be to address these challenges through all available means. We are happy to note that a number of organizations of the United Nations system have entered into collaborative activities with OIC, devoting their attention and resources to promoting better living conditions in the member countries of the OIC. We welcome such initiatives and encourage them, as they meaningfully contribute to addressing the challenges of development. We are particularly pleased about the recent cooperation agreement signed between OIC and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to promote activities relating to women's health in the OIC countries.

Bangladesh is happy to note that the Government of Switzerland has accorded full diplomatic facilities to the OIC representative in Geneva. My delegation has noted the views expressed by the Permanent Observer of the Mission of the OIC to the United Nations on the formalization of the status of the organization by the host Government and we believe that this issue deserves favourable consideration.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): The report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), under review in the General Assembly today, epitomizes the fact that effective cooperation between the international organizations could advance our collective goals of peace and prosperity.

Since formalizing cooperation in 1978, the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference have diversified mutual collaboration in a wide range of areas, including the political, cultural, humanitarian, trade and development, science and technology, education, environment and a number of other areas. The strengthened cooperation in recent years in the area of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution has yielded positive dividends. Their mutually supportive roles and efforts in some of the most egregious conflicts of modern times have received wide approbation and international recognition. Particular mention must be made of their historic collaboration in pursuing reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Palestine, the Middle East, Jammu and Kashmir, and Afghanistan.

The United Nations/OIC peacemaking mission to Afghanistan and a number of neighbouring countries during the period from 20 March to 15 April 1998 was a vital initiative that marked a new dimension in their cooperation. The Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General and the OIC Permanent Observer must be commended for their untiring and determined efforts. The report of the Secretary-General rightly mentions that, though this joint mission did not achieve any lasting results, it underlined the valuable potential of concrete joint cooperation in the field of peacemaking beyond the conflict in Afghanistan.

We feel encouraged by the substantial progress made recently by the latest United Nations/OIC joint initiative, undertaken in pursuance of the points of common understanding reached at the ministerial meeting of the "Six plus Two" group on Afghanistan in New York. The Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ambassador Brahimi, and the Special Representative of the OIC Secretary-General, Ambassador Ibrahim Saleh Bakr, must be commended for their resolute efforts and significant success in defusing the tensions on the borders between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

We also welcome the positive gestures of the Taliban leadership, in deference to the demands of the joint United Nations/OIC mission, to allow the return of the remaining dead bodies of the Iranian diplomats; the unconditional release of all Iranian prisoners; cooperation with the investigations into the killing of the diplomats;

assistance in the investigations into the reported mass killings and mass graves; and the return of the United Nations agencies and the international humanitarian organizations to resume their work in Afghanistan. It is our hope that the United Nations/OIC joint mission will succeed in its efforts to encourage a sustained dialogue between Iran and Afghanistan.

It is a matter of concern to all of us that the OIC Permanent Observer Mission has continued to function in New York for over 20 years without the formal recognition of the host Government. The OIC Mission is being denied the privileges and immunities which are essential for performing its multifarious responsibilities. The Mission must be accorded all the required facilities, as envisaged in Article 105 of the United Nations Charter, and the relevant provisions of the United Nations Headquarters agreement with the host country.

I may mention here that the Government of Pakistan has extended full diplomatic facilities to the Office of the OIC Permanent Representative to Afghanistan, based in Islamabad, which have facilitated its work, particularly the joint United Nations-OIC cooperation. Similarly, the Government of Switzerland has extended necessary privileges to the OIC Observer Mission in Geneva, facilitating its effective cooperation with the United Nations and the specialized agencies based in Europe. There is no reason why similar treatment could not be accorded to the Organization of the Islamic Conference in New York. This unfortunate anomaly must be rectified immediately, so that the OIC can function effectively and fulfil its tasks meaningfully.

In conclusion, I would like to express our hope that the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference will continue to flourish in all spheres in promoting the common goals of the international community.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me at the outset to express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 52/4 of 22 October 1997, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which appears in document A/53/430.

I also wish to express the satisfaction of my delegation and its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his special interest in the work of the OIC. This was borne out by his participation in the coordinating meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers, held in New York in parallel with the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, and in the Eighth OIC Summit, which was held at Tehran from 9 to 11 December 1997.

I should like to take this opportunity to warmly thank the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar, Mr. Nasser Abdulaziz Al-Nassir, for introducing the draft resolution on this item in document A/53/L.13.

Over the years, and since the cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC became institutionalized, the bonds of cooperation between the two organizations have steadily developed. The report of the Secretary-General clearly reflects the various aspects of the cooperation in the period under consideration.

We welcome the commendable efforts by the two organizations to step up their cooperation in all areas of common interest. In this spirit, we are pleased to note their resolve to strengthen further the ties of cooperation in the political domain, especially with regard to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and in the areas of coordination and economic and social development. In this regard, Morocco welcomes their joint efforts to help resolve conflicts in countries members of the OIC, as in the cases of Somalia, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and encourages them to continue their efforts in that area.

Morocco is pleased to note the general meeting of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and of the OIC and its specialized institutions, which took place in Geneva from 13 to 15 July 1998, and hopes that the programme of work for the period 1998-1999 will be implemented and yield the expected results. We are pleased to welcome the results of various aspects of the economic and social cooperation, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General.

Despite all these positive aspects, much remains to be done, and the situation of a great many Muslims in the Middle East, the Balkans and Afghanistan calls for particular attention on our part and requires that we redouble our efforts so that practical and lasting solutions can be identified and implemented to enable the populations of those regions to live in peace.

If the cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC is to yield the results for which we are all hoping, we believe that the two organizations must be endowed with the means necessary for them to fulfil their mandates in a satisfactory manner. To that end, we

believe that it is essential to grant the Office of the Permanent Observer for the OIC in New York the facilities that would undoubtedly assist it in fulfilling its obligations in favourable conditions.

That having been said, we hope that the adoption of the draft resolution before us today will make it possible to enter a new phase of strengthened links of cooperation and coordination between the two organizations aimed at achieving the noble objectives articulated in their respective Charters.

Mr. Rastan (Malaysia): My delegation is very pleased to speak on this agenda item. We are especially pleased that since it was first considered by the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session, significant progress has been achieved in the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). This progress is well reflected in the Secretary-General's report in document A/53/430. Malaysia fully supports further efforts to strengthen the fruitful cooperation that already exists between the two organizations. We are convinced that both would find further mutual benefit through increased cooperation. The OIC certainly can do a lot to complement the United Nations in the pursuit of many common goals.

The OIC was founded to strengthen unity and solidarity among the Islamic Ummah, or community. Malaysia is happy to be a member of the OIC and to have been associated with its activities since its establishment some 30 ago. The late Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, our first Prime Minister, became the first Secretary-General of the OIC. Malaysia has participated in the various OIC summits and other meetings held at the ministerial, senior official and expert levels. We are pleased that the membership of the OIC has increased steadily. As with the membership of the United Nations, countries from various regions of the world make up the membership of the OIC. Malaysia is pleased that Guyana has become the newest member of the OIC and that Thailand has been accepted as an observer. Both countries are active Members of the United Nations. They can surely join others to make important contributions to the work of the OIC, including with respect to the organization's cooperation with the United Nations.

Currently with 56 members, the OIC represents countries which constitute nearly one third of the membership of the United Nations. As an organization, the OIC has contributed and can continue to contribute constructively and positively to many United Nations activities. It shares many common objectives with the United Nations in respect of peace, security and development. Its activities complement and strengthen those of the United Nations in many areas, thus contributing to the promotion and realization of the principles and purposes set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Islamic countries today are confronted with the challenges of the modern era. One of those is to present the true image of Islam as a religion of peace. At the Eighth Islamic Summit Conference, in Tehran in December 1997, the Kings, heads of State and heads of Government of the OIC member countries expressed their concern at tendencies to portray Islam as a threat to the world, whereas Islamic civilization is firmly and historically grounded in peaceful coexistence, cooperation and mutual understanding among civilizations. My delegation believes that the United Nations is uniquely placed to bridge the gap between the Islamic countries and the rest of the international community through dialogue and cooperation. Therefore, we believe that the proposal by President Mohammed Khatami of Iran, which calls for the designation of the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, is indeed timely and should be widely supported. We think the United Nations and the OIC can cooperate meaningfully in achieving the objective of that proposal.

My delegation is fully appreciative of the keen interest shown by the United Nations Secretary-General in the activities of the OIC. The Secretary-General attended the Eighth OIC Summit in Tehran and also addressed the annual coordination meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers held at United Nations Headquarters in October 1997. We also recall that he sent his representatives to attend the twenty-fifth meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers, in Doha in March 1998, and the annual coordination meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers held recently in New York. In his address at the OIC coordination meeting last year, the Secretary-General referred to the United Nations as "our common home". The United Nations and the OIC, while serving in different capacities, indeed serve one common constituency: humanity. Deepening relations and increased cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC would, in the view of my delegation, help both organizations and their member States provide better service to that common constituency.

We believe both organizations can continue to explore new dimensions of cooperation in the field of

peace and security, as well as in other fields. The peacemaking mission to Afghanistan undertaken jointly by the United Nations and OIC last March and April was certainly a step in the right direction. My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General, who stated in his report that the mission underlined the valuable potential of concrete joint cooperation in the field of peacemaking between the United Nations and OIC. We agree that such efforts could be extended beyond the conflict in Afghanistan.

Malaysia believes that a smart partnership could be further developed between the two organizations in complementing each other's activities in the social, cultural and economic fields. In this regard, we welcome the general meeting between the representatives of the United Nations system and the OIC and its specialized institutions held in Geneva last July. We hope that further discussions will be carried out and follow-up action taken on the various items in the agenda, which is quite comprehensive, including on proposals for enhancing the mechanisms of cooperation between the United Nations system and the OIC and its specialized institutions.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the increasing number of cooperative arrangements between the United Nations system and the OIC and its specialized institutions. The Secretary-General's report provides very useful information on the level and extent of cooperation between various United Nations agencies on the one hand, and the OIC and its specialized institutions on the other. For example, we note that the International Fund for Agricultural Development has cooperated with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in co-financing 14 projects in 11 Islamic countries targeted to assist the most vulnerable of the rural poor. The International Labour Organization has been supportive of national development efforts of individual OIC member States. The United Nations Children's Fund and the OIC, through its specialized institution, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), have rededicated their efforts to ensure the survival, protection and well-being of children in the Islamic world. The United Nations Environment Programme and ISESCO, supported by the IDB and the Faysal Islamic Bank, have launched a joint initiative to hold a series of seminars on the theme of "Environment and Islam: towards an ethical environmental charter". Malaysia supports these activities and others which both the United Nations and the OIC have identified.

My delegation believes that, in the face of the challenges posed by globalization and market liberalization — particularly their negative impact on the economies of the developing countries, many of whom are members of the OIC — the dialogue that has been started between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions could also be extended to include dialogue with the specialized institutions of the OIC, in particular the IDB. Such a dialogue could contribute towards the development of ideas and proposals which would assist the international community in responding to such challenges, including the proposal to revamp the global financial architecture. The OIC may also want to take steps in this direction.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the OIC for their tireless efforts in forging the cooperation between the United Nations and OIC.

Mr. Tekaya (Tunisia) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The United Nations Charter has laid the foundation for cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations as evidence of what such cooperation can contribute to crystallize the principles and objectives of the United Nations in different fields.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which is being discussed by the General Assembly, is a vivid example of what can result from cooperation between a regional organization and the United Nations, as attested to by the comprehensive report by the Secretary-General on this subject. This cooperation covers several fields — political, social, humanitarian — within the framework of coordination and consultation, and the two Organizations are attempting to find solutions to problems related to international peace and security, disarmament, self-determination, decolonization, fundamental human rights, economic and social development and technical cooperation.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC has grown in the field of peacekeeping as well as in preventive diplomacy. In this area, consultations between them have been fostered through their joint endeavour to find a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan. It is with satisfaction that we note this and support it as we support all aspects of consultations between the two organizations and of coordination of their efforts relevant to all other problems of common interest.

Furthermore, in the economic and social field, cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC has recorded great progress in the fields of trade, technical cooperation, food security, agriculture, development of human resources and the provision of assistance to refugees, as well as in other fields, of which there are many examples.

Within this framework we call for further technical aid and all other forms of assistance by the United Nations and its relevant specialized agencies to the OIC and the different subsidiary organs in order to consolidate such cooperation. Accordingly, we support the draft resolution before the Assembly on cooperation between the two organizations.

Before concluding, I wish to refer to the importance we attach to having the Office of the Permanent Observer of the OIC in New York be provided with the facilities and the different privileges afforded other observer missions. This would facilitate its ability to carry out its work and responsibilities in the manner expected of it.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call upon the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Lamani (Organization of the Islamic Conference) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Since this is the first time that I am addressing the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Mr. Azzedine Laraki, and on my own behalf, to extend our congratulations to the President on his election. We are confident that his wide experience and his diplomatic skills are the best guarantee that the conduct of the Assembly will be accomplished in an effective and decisive manner. I should also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for the success he achieved in steering the work of the fifty-second session.

As we consider agenda item 26, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), I am honoured to review some of the developments that have taken place in this regard in the political, economic, social and humanitarian fields during the period under review.

Both organizations share a commitment to intensifying cooperation and coordination to find solutions to issues of common concern such as peace, security, disarmament, basic human rights, economic and social development and technical cooperation. The report of the Secretary-General which is now before us has highlighted this cooperation. In this regard, may I express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his wise conduct of the work of the Organization and also express our appreciation to the executive heads of the various United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies for their unremitting efforts towards the effective implementation of our joint programmes.

In recognition of the growing needs and common requirements of our member States, General Assembly resolution 52/4 of 22 October 1997 called for the strengthening of cooperation between our two organizations in the political, social, economic and humanitarian fields. The report of the Secretary-General contains a detailed review of these issues. Progress in these efforts was also reviewed at this year's meeting of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which was held at United Nations Headquarters on 29 September 1998, during the current session of the General Assembly.

Earlier, a general meeting on cooperation between representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations system and of the OIC and its specialized institutions had been held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 13 to 15 July 1998. At that meeting, the results of our joint activities and plans for the next biennium were examined, together with proposals for strengthening mechanisms for cooperation between our two organizations.

Here I want to highlight two examples of our cooperation in the political sphere during the period under review. First, a joint mission to Afghanistan and neighbouring States was organized last March and April, led by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Afghanistan. I had the privilege of participating in that mission on behalf of the OIC. Despite the complexities of the Afghan issue, those efforts helped to open dialogue among the Afghan factions and with neighbouring States. They also paved the way for further coordination and cooperation between the two organizations in the search for viable solutions to this long-standing issue. Regular consultations on this issue have continued between the Secretaries-General of our two organizations; they agreed at their meeting at United Nations Headquarters on 29

September 1998 to dispatch another joint mission to the region, led by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, in view of the recent escalation of tension in the area. There is no doubt that these joint efforts, which are supported and called for by the countries of the region through the recommendations of the 6 + 2 ministerial meeting on Afghanistan, clearly testify to the feasibility of cooperation between the two organizations in the sphere of peacemaking.

As regards the situation in Tajikistan, as the Secretary-General's report indicates, the OIC participated as an observer in the United Nations-sponsored inter-Tajik talks that concluded in 1997 with the signing of the General Agreement. The OIC is a member of the contact group established in connection with the peace process in Tajikistan.

Moreover, consultations continue between the Secretaries-General of the two organizations with regard to other important and urgent issues of common concern, including the question of Palestine, the situation in the Middle East, the Lockerbie issue, the conflict in Somalia, the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, the questions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Sierra Leone, and other matters.

I turn now from the political sphere to our cooperation in the field of economic and social development. Again, as the Secretary-General's report illustrates, progress continues in the areas of technology, trade, development, and technical cooperation among Islamic States, in addition to the questions of assistance to refugees, food security, agriculture, education, fighting illiteracy, investment mechanisms, development of human resources and the environment. Examples of such cooperation are on the increase. In this respect, I shall cite the recent training course for a number of institutions in Africa and the Arab States in food technology and textiles, held at Cairo in cooperation with the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Egyptian Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Another example was the signing of a memorandum of understanding earlier in October 1998 by the OIC Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund to enhance cooperation in the fields of family education, population census, reproductive health and related questions. Also worth mentioning is our ongoing cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund and other programmes and agencies of the United Nations.

I turn now to the OIC's interest in the matter of United Nations reform. OIC member States have a direct and vital stake in determining the outcome of those reforms. This was affirmed by the most recent annual coordination meeting of Foreign Ministers of OIC member States, held in New York on 1 October 1998.

His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Qatar, in his capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group, has just introduced a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which is before the Assembly in document A/53/L.13 of 27 October 1998. I hope it will be adopted by consensus. I would like to draw attention to two paragraphs of the operative part because of their importance.

First, paragraph 4, which requests the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to continue to cooperate in their common search for solutions to global problems, such as questions relating to international peace and security, disarmament, self-determination, fundamental human rights, social and economic development, and technical cooperation. There is no doubt that this paragraph reflects the will of the General Assembly to involve the OIC in diplomatic and mediation efforts to find solutions for a number of issues of common concern.

Secondly, paragraph 10 urges the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system, especially the lead agencies, to provide increased technical and other forms of assistance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions in order to enhance cooperation. We would welcome such support, which would strengthen our capacity to help make the OIC contribution to our joint programmes and activities more effective.

Allow me to raise an issue which I had hesitated to mention before the General Assembly. However it is my hope that raising it will enable us to achieve the desired objective. The issue concerns the facilities and privileges granted to missions to the United Nations in accordance with the Headquarters Agreement. It is well known that the Permanent Observer Mission of the OIC, like those of the League of Arab States and of the Organization of African Unity, does not fully enjoy these facilities and privileges as compared to the missions of some other regional organizations. I should mention here that the Permanent Observer Mission of the OIC and the offices

of other intergovernmental and regional organizations accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva enjoy all such facilities and privileges, which enables them to carry out their various tasks and responsibilities more effectively.

The Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States raised this issue in his statement before the General Assembly last week. We raise it once again in the hope that the authorities responsible for the implementation of the Headquarters Agreement will give serious consideration to this matter and will attach to it the importance it deserves so that we can discharge our responsibilities fully and effectively.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm our ongoing interest in cooperation and coordination with the United Nations and our full commitment to the provisions and the noble purposes of the Charter.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.13.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt that draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.13 was adopted (resolution 53/16).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 26?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.